

was seneschal to the Earl of March,<sup>1</sup> a connection which intensified the animosity of his relations to the House of Lancaster without serving to protect him from the Duke's vengeance. He was a man fearless of consequences in an age of violence, one whose spirit imprisonment could not bend nor threats overpower, and who long continued in faithful service to the Commons. He was now for the first time elected to the honourable and dangerous office of Speaker. As in those days the communications with the King and Lords were the most important and arduous part of the business of the Lower House, the Speaker who 'spoke' for his brother members before the princes of the land had need to be the foremost and best politician among the knights. He was not merely an officer of highest dignity and an honoured judge between contending parties, for he was himself the leader of the party of the Commons. Peter de la Mare fulfilled the combined functions of Pym and Lenthall.

As a result of debates in the Chapter House among themselves and the Lords whom they had associated with their counsels, the Commons determined to display the standard of revolt, and fixed on a method of attack. When they appeared in full Parliament with the Speaker at their head, the plan they had formed in secret was unfolded in public. Peter de la Mare's first duty was to answer the demand for money made by the Chancellor. To have made the grant would have been to invite instant dissolution, but the Speaker not only refused the money until the grievances of the nation were satisfied, but took the financial position as the text for a sermon on the required reforms. He declared that the reason why the King was impoverished was because his advisers absorbed his income themselves; that if it were not for the \* privy friends of the King,' the treasury would still be full, and that therefore to grant further taxes until the administration had been reformed would do no good either to King or kingdom. He proceeded to enumerate the principal ways by which the nation had been robbed, and requested the King to fix a time to hear these charges brought home against the guilty. Such

<sup>1</sup> *Chron. Ang.*, 108.